

PAGES AS AMENDED



RECEIVED  
SEP 06 2001  
Technology Center 2100

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

RECEIVED  
SEP 06 2001  
Technology Center 2100

TITLE



METHODS AND MEANS FOR PROVIDING REBATES

#### REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is related to Provisional Application Serial No. 60/006,011 filed May 19, 1998 whose benefit is hereby claimed and the content thereof is hereby incorporated by reference.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An embodiment of the invention involves a clearinghouse component, a nonprofit component, a supporter component, and a merchant component. The clearinghouse component connects the other three components via a variety of entry terminals.

According to another embodiment of the invention, for example, at the time of enrollment the invention provides each supporter with an individual identification number (ID) to be used at the time of store purchase. When supporters are shopping in their usual and customary way (for example, paying for goods and/or services exactly

when they receive them), the clerk enters their ID into an entry terminal (such as a cash register) by bar code, mag stripe, key stroke, or other modality.

According to another embodiment, for example, the entry terminal records the ID, as well as the amount of dollars spent in the transaction. The information is then stored and uploaded to the central clearinghouse component. At the appropriate time the central clearinghouse component reports all transaction data to the merchant component that in turn sends a rebate check to the nonprofit component.

According to another embodiment, for example, the nonprofit component receives reports provided by the clearinghouse component as to the amount of spending completed by the supporters at the store level.